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## RESPONSES TO INFORMATION REQUESTS (RIRs)

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Honduras: Femicide and spousal and sexual abuse, and services provided to the victims (2009-2011)

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### 1. Femicide

A report published in 2011 by the Women's Forum Against Femicide (Tribuna de Mujeres contra los Femicidios), a network of feminist organizations (*La Tribuna* 11 Mar. 2010), states that, in 2009, there was [translation] "a clear increase in the number of femicides in the country" (Tribuna de Mujeres 2011, 19). The number of femicides committed in 2009 rose to 407, or a monthly average of 34 (ibid.). The data in the report shows that, of these 407 femicides, 156 were committed in San Pedro Sula, 145 in Tegucigalpa and 106 in the rest of the country, which demonstrates that the femicides occurred principally in urban areas (ibid.). In comparison, according to the National Women's Institute (Instituto Nacional de la Mujer) data in an article published by the Inter Press Service (IPS), an international association of journalists based in Italy (IPS n.d.), 377 women were murdered in 2009 (IPS 2010). Quoted in an article published in *La Prensa*, a newspaper based in San Pedro Sula, a representative of the National Commissioner for Human Rights in Honduras (Comisionado Nacional de los Derechos Humanos en Honduras, CNDH) stated that there were 343 [translation] "violent deaths of women" in 2010 and at least 62 in January and February 2011 (*La Prensa* 8 Mar. 2011). According to this article, the data was confirmed by the Special Prosecutor for Women in the Public Ministry (Fiscalía [Especial] de la Mujer del Ministerio Público) (ibid.). According to data from the prosecutor's office, published on 2 August 2011 in an article in the newspaper *El Heraldo*, based in Tegucigalpa, 207 women had been murdered since the beginning of 2011. In an article published by Noticias Univisión, an American Spanish-language information site, that same prosecutor stated that [translation] "more than 1,500 women were murdered in Honduras between 2008 and 2011" (25 Nov. 2011).

According to a study conducted by some organizations for the protection of women, the data from which was published in an article in *La Tribuna*, a newspaper based in Tegucigalpa, 96 percent of femicides committed in the country between 2005 and 2010 were [translation] "awaiting resolution or would simply go unpunished" (*La Tribuna* 31 Oct. 2011). According to the data from this study, this impunity is the result of [translation] "deficiencies in the investigative process" (ibid.). In the same vein, in an article in *La Prensa*, the representative of the National Commissioner of Human Rights in Honduras was quoted as saying that [translation] "more than 80 percent of crimes committed against women [since 2005] went unpunished" because of bungled investigations (8 Mar. 2011). However, an article published by *El Heraldo* states that the Crimes Against Life Unit (Unidad de Delitos contra la Vida) in the Office of the Special Prosecutor for Women succeeded in bringing to court 221 charges against people suspected in the violent deaths of women (*El Heraldo* 2 Aug. 2011).

The article also states that, in 2010, 56 people were convicted of such crimes (ibid.). The Research Directorate could find no other information on this subject. According to the article in *La Tribuna*, in 2010, Honduras ranked third among Central American countries for [translation] “the highest number of violent deaths of women” (31 Oct. 2011).

## 2. Spousal and Sexual Abuse

According to the data for 2009 in a report presented to the UN by the Violence Observatory (Observatorio de la Violencia) of the National Autonomous University of Honduras (Universidad Nacional Autónoma de Honduras), 363 women were murdered in 2009 and 87 of these women died as a result of family violence (UN 8 Apr. 2010). Furthermore, out of 4,100 women [victims of abuse], 61.1 percent were examined by the Forensic Pathology [Branch] ([Dirección de] Medicina Forense) because of injuries inflicted, in the majority of the cases, by a family member, a friend, an acquaintance, a spouse or a former spouse (ibid.). This report states that 1,937 women were victims of sexual assault and that the National Directorate of Criminal Investigations (Dirección Nacional de Investigación Criminal) received 11,871 complaints of [translation] “offences against women” in 2009 (ibid.).

According to the Special Prosecutor for Women, the Public Ministry receives over 20,000 complaints of spousal abuse annually, and over 11,000 complaints of sexual abuse were filed between 2008 and 2011 (Noticias Univisión 25 Nov. 2011). According to *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2010*, published by the United States Department of State, the police received 7,742 complaints of spousal abuse in 2010 (US 8 Apr. 2011, 31).

According to an article published in *La Prensa*, [translation] “[spousal] abuse is not only experienced by married women but also by women who are engaged to be married” (*La Prensa* 5 Sept. 2011). According to data from the Special Tribunal Against Domestic Abuse (Juzgado Especial contra la Violencia Doméstica) published in that same article, women are victims of abuse from the age of 16 (ibid.). According to the coordinator of the special tribunal, [translation] “alcohol [...], [male] dominance, the financial situation and infidelity” were the main reasons “pushing a man to abuse his spouse” (ibid.). The coordinator also explained that San Pedro Sula, Villanueva and Choluteca are among the cities having a greater number of women who are victims of spousal abuse (ibid.). The national coordinator of the Office of the Special Prosecutor for Women stated that, in San Pedro Sula, an average of 10 complaints a day involving abuse are filed with the authorities (ibid.). She explained that [translation] “physical and verbal assaults against women were the primary reasons for the complaints” received by the police and the prosecutor’s office (ibid.). She added that, on weekends, the number of complaints rises from 10 to 15 a day and that, in the north of the country, 5,000 complaints of spousal abuse are filed each year (ibid.).

According to *Country Reports 2010*, rape is “a serious and pervasive social problem” (US 8 Apr. 2011, 30). In September 2010, the police reportedly received 2,048 cases of rape, with 1,697 of these incidents against minors (ibid.).

According to data taken from a survey conducted in four countries in Central America (Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua and El Salvador) by the United Nations Population Fund, 68 percent of women victims of sexual abuse in Honduras did not seek help following such an assault (Agencia EFE 22 Sept. 2011). Data from this survey also shows that 19 percent of women victims of physical or sexual abuse by their spouse did not seek help because they [translation] “fear their attacker” (ibid.).

For more information on the penalties incurred for rape, see the translation of Article 140 of the Honduran Penal Code attached to this response.

### 3. Services Provided to Victims

An article published in August 2011 by *La Prensa* explained that officers of the United Nations Population Fund, in collaboration with the Public Ministry (Ministerio Público), went to La Ceiba in order to provide training to Health Ministry personnel (*La Prensa* 1 Aug. 2011). This training dealt primarily with [translation] “the treatment of patients who are victims of sexual abuse,” but file confidentiality and immediate access to medical care were also among the issues addressed (ibid.). According to the same article, a representative from the Office of the Family of the Departmental Health Directorate (Consejería de Familia de la Dirección Departamental de Salud) stated that, each month, between 10 and 15 women victims of sexual abuse receive assistance from the Ministry of Health and the Public Ministry (ibid.). Corroborating information could not be found by the Research Directorate.

According to an article published on 18 November 2011, by *La Prensa*, a pilot project, called the integrated assistance model, was implemented by the Integrated Centre (Centro integrado) in La Ceiba. The objective of the project is [translation] “to give personalized attention [to women victims of spousal abuse] by bringing together investigators, a psychologist and a complaints officer” in order to simultaneously gather information about the victim and her testimony (*La Prensa* 18 Nov. 2011). Corroborating information on this pilot project could not be found by the Research Directorate.

At the local level, the Quality of Life Association (Asociación Calidad de Vida), which is located in Tegucigalpa, helps women victims of spousal abuse, (Asociación Calidad de Vida n.d.a). Through the House of Well-Being program (La Casa del Bien Estar), the Association provides [translation] “a safe place [for women and their children] to escape the violence with which they live (Asociación Calidad de Vida n.d.b.). According to the Association’s Internet site, services provided to women include temporary shelter for a period of three months; social, psychological and legal assistance; individual counselling; family support; and tutoring for children (ibid.).

The Centre for Women’s Rights (Centro de Derechos de Mujeres, CDM), also located in Tegucigalpa, is a feminist organization that [translation] “promotes empowerment, justice, and the exercise and enjoyment of rights, social life and equality between men and women” (CDM n.d.a). Among the programs offered by CDM, the Prevention of Violence Against Women and Victims’ Assistance program (Prevención y Atención a la Violencia contra la Mujer) aims, among other things, [translation] “to improve access to justice [and] reduce discrimination against women from a socio-legal and sexual-equality perspective” (CDM n.d.b). In the program, women receive legal and psychological assistance and they have the opportunity to talk with other women who are experiencing similar situations in which their rights are being violated (ibid.).

According to the Global Fund for Women (GFW), the Moon House Association (Asociación Casa Luna), located in the city of Tocoa, works with rural and low-income women “to strengthen their understanding of their rights” and teaches them to defend those rights on various fronts (GFW n.d.). The Association provides legal advocacy for women victims of violence and assists them throughout the legal process (ibid.). In addition to helping women and their children to relocate “when their domestic situations have become too dangerous,” the Association also provides them with psychological support (ibid.). The Association also produces radio programs on spousal abuse and women’s rights (ibid.).

According to an article published by the Municipal Partnerships for the Prevention of Violence in Central America program (Alianzas Municipales para la Prevención de la Violencia en Centro América, AMUPREV) (AMUPREV n.d.), the city of La Ceiba has a

shelter, called Ixchel House (La Casa de la Mujer Ixchel), for women victims of violence (AMUPREV 5 Aug. 2011). According to the article, the shelter has been open for two years, and women are referred there by the Municipal Office for Women (Oficina Municipal de la Mujer), the prosecutor's office (Fiscalía), the courts, the police or the Visitación Padilla Women's Peace Movement (Movimiento de mujeres por la paz Visitación Padilla) (ibid.). Women may stay at the shelter for a maximum of three months, as this is deemed to be sufficient time for them [translation] "to deal with the issue of violence and to make decisions" (ibid.).

According to *Country Reports 2010*, there are two government-operated shelters for women victims of violence—one in the city of Choluteca and the other in La Ceiba (US 8 Apr. 2011, 31). Non-governmental organizations operated other shelters in Santa Rosa de Copan and Juticalpa (ibid.). However, these shelters do not function effectively due to insufficient public funding (ibid.). Corroborating information on these programs or these shelters could not be found by the Research Directorate.

This Response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Research Directorate within time constraints. This Response is not, and does not purport to be, conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim for refugee protection. Please find below the list of sources consulted in researching this Information Request.

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### **Additional Sources Consulted**

**Oral sources:** Attempts to contact representatives of the following organizations were unsuccessful: Dirección de Medicina Forense, Instituto Nacional de la Mujer, Ministerio Público, United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, Secretaría de Justicia y Derechos Humanos de Honduras. Representatives of the Centro de Derechos de Mujeres, the Centro de Estudios de la Mujer and the Colectiva de Mujeres Hondureñas were unable to provide information.

**Internet sites, including:** Amnesty International; Centro de Derechos de Mujeres; Centro de Estudios de la Mujer; Colectiva de Mujeres Hondureñas; *Diario CoLatino*; *Diario Tiempo*; Enlace Académico; Factiva; Global Fund for Women; Fundación Mujeres; *El Heraldo*; Human Rights Watch; Instituto Hondureño de la Niñez y de la Familia; International Crisis Group; *El Libertador*; Observatorio Centroamericano sobre Violencia; Oxfam International; Pan American Health Organization; Radio Cadena Voces; United Nations - UN Development Program, UN Secretary-General's database on violence against women, UN Women.

### **Attachment**

Honduras. 1983 (amended 2008). *Código Penal Decreto 144-83*. Article 140, translated by the Translation Bureau, Public Works and Government Services Canada.  
<[http://www.poderjudicial.gob.hn/juris/Codigos/C%C3%B3digo%20Penal%20\(09\).pdf](http://www.poderjudicial.gob.hn/juris/Codigos/C%C3%B3digo%20Penal%20(09).pdf)> [Accessed 19 Jan. 2012]

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